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A sketch of the life

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CASPAR WISTER, M.D.

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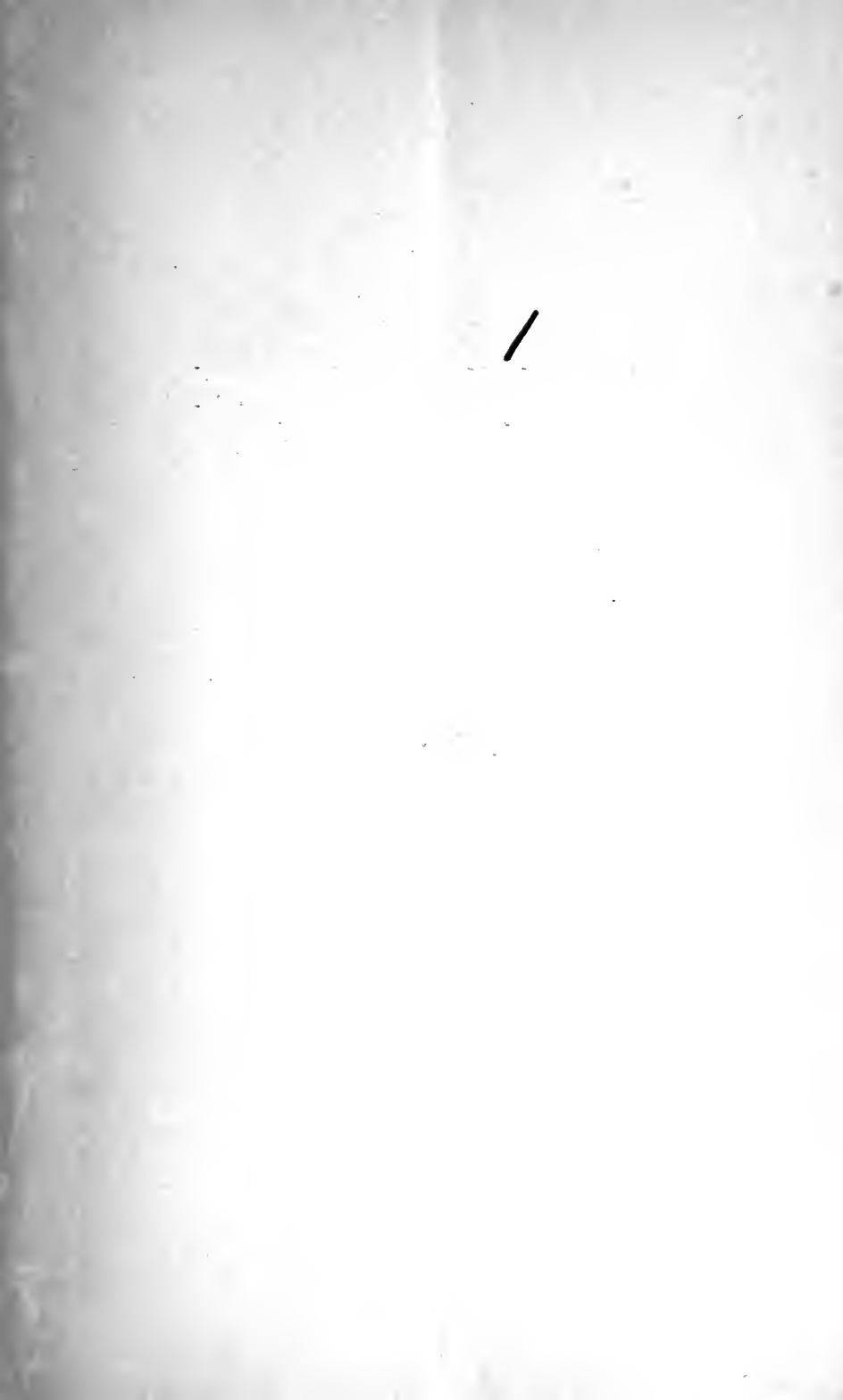
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A SKETCH
OF THE LIFE OF
CASPAR WISTER, M.D.

BY
W. S. W. RUSCHENBERGER, M.D.

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A S K E T C H
OF THE LIFE OF
C A S P A R W I S T E R, M.D.,
WITH NOTICES OF HIS ANCESTORS.
BY W. S. W. RUSCHENBERGER, M.D.

[Read November 5, 1890.]

THEORIES of heredity imply that the foundation of the natural characteristics of a man, structural and mental, is laid and gradually evolved by his ancestors very many decades before his birth; and that a detailed record of the natural qualities of his lineal predecessors might enable an expert in the premises to foretell the general character, if not the fortune of the newly-born infant, as satisfactorily at least as any forecast made by astrologers of old. In the present state of our knowledge of the complex operations of heredity, this suggestion is manifestly premature, and not likely to be realized.

Professor James H. Stoller says, in an essay on *Human Heredity*, "All the qualities of our human nature come to us by inheritance."¹ And Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes says—*Over the Tea cups*—"What he is by nature is not determined by himself, but by his parentage."

The accuracy of this assumption may be questioned. Even if exact, the inheritance is unequally and irregularly transmitted. Of many children of the same parentage, born and reared under the same circumstances, all may be of normal stature and intelligence or above; but sometimes one is unaccountably an ingenious dwarf, or an idiot physically well developed, or misshaped, "scarce half made up."

Dr. August Weismann says, in his essay on the *Duration of Life*, "We know that long life is hereditary." And yet all the children of

¹ Popular Science Monthly, July, 1890.

octogenarian ancestors do not uniformly attain advanced age, although all alike live under the same influences. Some of them do not reach adult years.

Notable fecundity, and other natural qualities of ancestors, are not always transmitted to their descendants.

The sons of eminently great fathers are not always endowed in any respect above the average of men of their class and time. And very frequently the sons of clergymen are neither naturally fitted nor inclined to follow their fathers' examples. The ancestors of distinguished men are often obscure people. For instance, Benjamin Franklin. His remote origin has been traced to a family of the name, in which a farm was owned for three hundred years or more at Ecton, in Northamptonshire, sixty-six miles from London. The eldest son regularly inherited the farm, and was always a blacksmith. All males of the family worked at the same or other trades. Josiah Franklin, father of the Doctor, about 1685 came to Boston with his wife and three children. Lack of custom and profit in his trade of dyer, induced him to become a tallow chandler and soap boiler. In 1689, when he was thirty-five years old, his wife died, soon after the birth of their seventh child. Within a year he married Abiah, youngest daughter of Peter Folger, "a learned and godly Englishman." Dr. Franklin was one of their ten children; and possibly may be indebted to the Folger stock for some of his natural endowments,¹ mental and physical. Be this as it may he far out-measured in every sense his uterine fellows.

On the other hand peculiar qualities so fully characterize members of the same family that their kinship is easily recognized. Dramatic talent often runs in a family through several generations, but not always. And in many instances musical talent in like manner seems to be an inheritance.

Observation shows that criminal classes include numerous squads of blood relations, sires and sons. This feature in heredity seems to be so clearly determined that it might be accepted as a conclusive reason for diminishing the number of criminals in the future, by legally requiring that every person, male and female, on admission into a prison on a second conviction of crimes should be at once anæsthetized and permanently sterilized by the surgeon of the institution, as the

¹ Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, by James Parton: Mason Brothers, New York, 1864.

initiatory, radical means of their reformation. Such an economic application of a doctrine of heredity might be opposed by those who do not believe in it, as well as by those whose clemency for criminals makes them forgetful of the welfare of honest people.

Besides virtues and vices, according to both popular and medical opinion, diseases are inherited. Insanity, gout, drunkenness, tuberculosis run in families from parents to children. The inheritance of tuberculosis may be now considered questionable by some since hosts of observations, it is asserted, demonstrate that tuberculosis is a specific infectious disease, caused alone by the bacillus tuberculosis. But in spite of the earnest, ceaseless and praiseworthy labors of Dr. Koch and many others during several years, to ascertain the origin and habits of this bacillus with a view to discover means for its destruction, it still carries on its ravages with impunity; and notwithstanding the indictment found against it by most astute detectives, the mortality from tuberculosis remains unchanged.

The many problems of heredity remain to be solved. Mr. Francis Galton, who has studied the subject during the past quarter of a century and published several essays and books about it, says, in his last work, that "no complete theory of inheritance has yet been propounded that meets with general acceptance."¹

And Dr. August Weismann says, "I am unable to indicate the molecular and chemical properties of the cell upon which the duration of its power of reproduction depends; to ask this is to demand an explanation of the nature of heredity—a problem the solution of which may still occupy many generations of scientists. At present we can hardly venture to propose any explanation of the nature of heredity."²

And recently it has been asserted, that we of the present generation are wrong to be unconcerned for the physical and mental qualities, not only of the next but of all generations in the remotest future. Heredity and evolution, in obedience to the will of the omniscient Creator, have wrought alone from the beginning, to increase, raise the physical and mental powers of the human race from the lowest level to the highest degree of excellence; but now, the coöperative assistance

¹ *Natural Inheritance*, by Francis Galton, etc.: Macmillan & Co., London and New York, 1889, 8vo., pp. 259.

² *Essays upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems*, by Dr. August Weismann, Professor in the University of Freiburg in Breisgau. Authorized Translation edited by Edward B. Poulton, M.A., etc., Selmar Schönland, Ph.D., etc., and Arthur E. Shipley, M.A., etc., 8vo., pp. 455. Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1889.

of all men of to-day is needed to prevent the rate of progress from being lessened. Over-work of all kinds, and many other excesses are impairing our vigor, and for this reason it is a duty to secure for ourselves, by appropriate hygienic means, the highest degree of physical and mental force attainable for the benevolent object of transmitting the same to our posterity.

Accepting an assumption that the characteristics of man may have come to him through the functions of reproductive cells in the bodies of remote ancestors, this sketch of the life of Dr. Caspar Wister begins with brief notices of his great-great-grandparents and their lineal offspring.

The family names, Wister and Wistar, have been traced back about two centuries.

THE GREAT-GREAT GRANDFATHER OF THE WISTERS.

Hans Caspar Wüster, and his wife, Anna Katarina, resided at Hilsbach, a village seventeen miles S.S.E. from Heidelberg, in the Duchy of Baden. He was Jäger, that is, Hunter or gamekeeper of the prince Palatine—a prince entitled to privileges in the palace.

The Rector of the Lutheran church at Hilsbach has in his keeping a book in which are recorded the baptisms of the parish, from 1699. The register used in the church for the purpose prior to that date had been accidentally consumed by fire. This one contains the names of five of their six children, with the date of birth of each. The name of Caspar, the oldest, is not in it, because he was born February 3, 1696, before the Rector's old church book was opened for entries.

Though not recorded, it seems fairly supposable that Hans Caspar and his wife knew who were their parents, grand parents, and great grand parents, though comparatively obscure people, and for this reason it may be admitted that knowledge of the family existed as far back at least as the middle of the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, the individual characteristics of Hans Caspar and his ancestors have not been recorded.

Theories of evolution and heredity suggest that all pedigrees started alike and at the same time with the beginning of the human race, and that, under natural law, their growth and duration were the same. In this condition of perfect equality in this respect, every one knew that he had forefathers as a matter of course, and did not appraise himself more highly than his neighbors on that account. In the course of

time, however, views changed and men were pleased to believe they were better for the virtues of parents. Then it came to be conventionally agreed that a pedigree worthy of mention must be traceable through a line of ancestors, each being named with his relative position and connection in the line clearly designated. Therefore, the value of a pedigree is commensurate with the length of the period during which it can be traced.

As early as 1683, William Penn invited Mennonites in Holland, Germany, and elsewhere to settle in the new country, and offered to sell them land in his province. Numbers accepted the invitation, and, to escape persecutions they suffered from religious intolerance at home, became valuable citizens of the English colonies. Among the early Mennonite settlers in Germantown were many weavers. The Friends and the Mennonites were peaceable neighbors; both sects conscientiously believing that war and bearing arms under any circumstances are repugnant to their sense of religious duty.

These immigrants no doubt reported to their kinsmen and friends in Europe the advantages of living in America in a manner to induce many to follow them.

Caspar, the eldest son of Hans Caspar, dissatisfied with the aspect of the probable opportunities to increase his means of livelihood in Germany, started, as soon his age authorized him legally to act independently of his father, to seek better chances of happiness and fortune in the new world. He arrived in Philadelphia September 16, 1717. His Jäger rifle, which he brought with him, is still an heirloom in the family.

When Caspar Wüster settled in Philadelphia the inhabitants were subjects of George I., King of England, and were English in their modes of thinking, their political affiliations and language. According to a family tradition his name was anglicized by his American associates. As he spelled it aloud as he had done in his native land, they substituted in place of the German *ü*, marked by an *umlaut*, the English *i*, which letter in sound was supposed to approximate nearest to his pronunciation of it; and for like reason, the German *e* was superseded by the English broad *a*, and so they wrote his name Caspar Wistar; and concordantly he signed his oath of allegiance to King George I., in 1721.

In the first years of his residence in Philadelphia he carried on the business of button-maker, and was successful. The Colonial Assembly enacted a law "for the better enabling Caspar Wistar and John

Crapo, merchants, and Nicolay Gateau to trade and hold lands in the Province." He and other born subjects of the Emperor of Germany had petitioned for such legislation, April 27, 1724. The *Weekly Mercury*, in 1726, recorded him among "the principal merchants of the city."

He purchased land where North Broad Street and the Ridge Avenue are now; some of it is still owned by his descendants.

In 1726 he married Katherine Johnson of Germantown. His son Richard, born in 1727, the eldest of his seven children, married in 1751, Sarah, daughter of Bartholomew Wyatt, of Mannington township, Salem County, N. J. He bought between two and three thousand acres of land in that county, and established, about a mile and a half from Allowaystown, a glass factory, said to be the first in this country. The immediate management of it was confided to a superintendent, for the reason that he resided in Philadelphia.

He had eight children. One of them was Dr. Caspar Wistar, the eminent professor of anatomy in the University of Pennsylvania, and the fourth President of the American Philosophical Society—from January, 1815, to January, 1818.¹

As soon as his observation and experience had satisfied him that Philadelphia afforded better opportunities than Hilsbach for a young man to seek a fortune, Caspar advised his younger brother John to settle here without delay. John, however, declined the invitation, because he was not willing to leave Germany while his father was living.

Not very long after the death of Hans Caspar Wüster, January 13, 1726, and about the time that George II. became King of England, June 11, 1727, he left Hilsbach, and, at the end of a four months' voyage, landed in Philadelphia, September, 1727, in the nineteenth year of his age. He was born November 7, 1708.

These two brothers, who were the founders of the Wistar and Wister families of Philadelphia and New Jersey, probably had no more education and training at home than were usually given to hunters and gamekeepers in Germany at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

¹ History of the Counties of Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland, New Jersey, with Biographical Sketches of their Prominent Citizens. By Thomas Cushing, M.D., and Charles E. Sheppard, Esq. Quarto, pp. 723. Everts & Peck: Philadelphia, 1883.

THE GREAT-GRANDFATHER OF THE WISTERS.

Besides robust health, good sense, a cheerful disposition, honest and industrious ways, John brought with him little, if any, capital. He soon found employment.

He was so prosperous that he was able in 1731, to purchase an extensive plot of ground on the north side of Market Street, between Third and Fourth Streets. It was overgrown with blackberries. These he converted into wine, and sold it so well that he was induced to become a wine merchant, at first on a small scale; imported wines from Germany, and prospered in the trade. Subsequently, however, he dealt exclusively in drygoods.

He attended closely to business, was thrifty and invested his savings preferably in real estate. He built a store and dwelling on his Market Street property; bought land in Germantown, part of which is still known as Wister's woods, and a tract on the main street, upon which he constructed, in 1744, a fine large house for his family residence in summer.

The Market Street house, now No. 325, was one of the first in the city in which Dr. Benjamin Franklin (who was among the acquaintances of John Wister as well as of all good citizens of the time), about the year 1753, erected a lightning rod—a hexagonal iron rod—still in possession of the family—which was so connected with a bell that it rang whenever the atmosphere was locally surcharged with electricity. The ringing of the bell annoyed Mrs. Wister, who entertained a notion, then not uncommon, that a lightning rod was in some manner sinful; —“an impious attempt to ‘control the artillery of Heaven,’”¹—and at her instigation was after a time removed.

Simple in his manners and tastes, John Wister gave his leisure to books; was benevolent, disposed to be religious. He sent money to relatives in Germany; for a time, he had bread baked in his kitchen to be distributed on Saturdays to destitute applicants for it at his door; and, in 1760, he contributed his quota towards founding the German-town academy.

He married, February 1731, Salome Zimmerman of Lancaster County, Pa., who died at the end of five years. Of their four children only one, named Salome, reached adult age.

¹ See, *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*. By James Parton. New York, 1864, vol. i., p. 294.

Anna Catherina Rubenkam of Wanfried, Germany, became his second wife, November 10, 1737, and lived till May 17, 1770. Three of their five children attained mature age.

His third wife, a Moravian nun of Ephrata, was without issue.

While a British army occupied Philadelphia he wrote to his granddaughters, Sally and Betsy, then at Gwynedd, July 6, 1777, "I am not at liberty to visit you because I cannot take the 'Test,' and I am afraid to venture for fear of being arrested and committed to jail. I intend therefore staying at home.

"Do not be ashamed to learn to do any country work; if you do not want to do it hereafter you can always let it alone. There is no shame in learning to do anything that is useful."

Again, December 22, 1777, he wrote, * * "I cannot at present send you anything, for the merchants will not sell their goods but for hard money; and hard money I have but little of * * * We cannot buy provisions for old or for Congress money here in town.

"But, my dear children, if the Lord grants me health till next spring, I then intend to buy cloth and other necessary things for you all. I then hope that old money will pass again.

"They have quartered a Cornet and his wife, and a white man and a negro, besides three horses and a cow upon me.

"They have taken the three best rooms in my house, and I must now live in the back building. It most kills me to be so ill-treated in my old age, that I must give up my own bedchamber, which I have occupied nearly thirty years to a stranger. I have very little rest, day or night besides."

Nevertheless, he survived these annoyances several years.

His last illness of six days, during which his faculties were unimpaired, was passed without a murmur. He died, January 31, 1789, in the eighty-first year of his age. His remains were buried in the Friends' cemetery, at Arch and Fourth streets.

He bequeathed his estate to his children.

It is conjectured that John Wister opportunely trained his sons Daniel and William, as well as his grandson John, to the dry-goods trade, and at the proper time admitted each to a share in it. As the sons were partners in the firm at the time of their father's death, they jointly continued the business.

William Wister, who was born March 29, 1746, died unmarried in 1800, in the 54th year of his age. It is stated as evidence of his good standing in the community that the Provincial Assembly appointed

him with his kinsmen Owen Jones, Jr., and Col. Samuel Miles, to endorse the paper currency of the time.

THE GRANDFATHER OF THE WISTERS.

Daniel Wister, son of John and his second wife Anna Catharine, both of German birth and parentage, was born at No. 141—now 325—Market Street, Philadelphia, February 4, 1739.

He was educated in the Moravian College at Ephrata, Pa. His classical attainments were good. Besides German, he understood other modern languages.

His temperament was kindly and cheerful; his natural disposition genial, social, a *bon vivant*; and he possessed so much of the sportsman's spirit as to be interested in owning horses, dogs and cats. He had many caged birds in his house. At times their singing was so noisy and discordant that it was usual to silence the birds by covering their cages to enable persons at meals to hear each other talk.

Like his father he was successful in business.

He married, May 5, 1760, Lowry, a daughter of Owen Jones, (who was Colonial Treasurer), and his wife Susannah, of St. Mary's and Wynnewood, Lower Merion, Pa., and so crossed his German with a good Welsh breed of the Society of Friends. They had nine children, namely Sarah, Elizabeth, John, Hannah, Susan, John, William, Charles Jones and William Wynne. Some of them died in infancy.

In Sept. 1777, he moved his family to Gwynedd, North Wales, Pa. where his daughter Sarah, then a sprightly girl of fifteen, commonly called Sally Wister, kept a diary addressed to her friend Deborah Norris, beginning Sept. 25, 1777, and ending June 20, 1778. This interesting journal, kept during an exciting period of the Revolution, has been published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. She as well as all of his descendants, with rare exceptions were endowed with a poetic vein and wrote rhyming letters; and some of them had a taste and capacity for music.

Daniel Wister died Oct. 27, 1805 in the sixty-seventh year of his age. During the last few days of his life he was mentally astray and talked only in Latin.

THE FATHER OF DR. CASPAR WISTER.

Charles Jones, the eighth child of Daniel and Lowry Wister, was born, April 12, 1782, at the Market Street home; and died July 23, 1865, in the 84th year of his age.

In virtue of his birthright in the Society, derived from his mother, at the age of nine years he entered a school established, at the time, on Fourth Street south of Chestnut Street, by members of the Society of Friends. English, mathematics and the classics were taught in the school. He studied French under Monsieur N. G. Dufief, author of *Nature Displayed*, etc., a prominent teacher in his day, and German under Herr Giese. In the summer time he attended the Germantown Academy. He was a merry, mischievous boy, and wrote verses at the age of twelve.

In 1799, in his seventeenth year, he was apprenticed to his uncle William to learn the ways of the dry goods trade.

It was a duty of the apprentice to go at least once a year on horseback to places in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia to collect debts to the firm. As payments were made in coin which was carried in his saddle-bags, during those journeys he was not always free from apprehension of highwaymen.

While travelling on those collecting tours his sisters, Sally and Betsy, occasionally cheered him with rhyming epistles, sometimes jocularly alluding to his scientific and literary tastes.

For instance, Sally wrote :

“From coatings, cloths and bombazines,
Modes, ribbons, chintzes and moreens,
Say, does not oft thy fancy rove ?

* * * * *

Or, when in packing box thou’rt placed
With all mercantile powers graced ;
Surrounded half way to thy neck,
With callimancoes, muslin, check,
Say, is thy active roving mind
Chained to the spot where thou’rt confined ?
Or does it wander, day by day,
To chemistry or algebra ?
Say, does the microscopic wonder
Keep merchandizing tumults under ?
Or, does the bright electric fire
Bid all inferior thoughts retire ?”

Again, his sister Elizabeth, commonly called Betsy, who often contributed stanzas to the Portfolio, wrote to him, with other lines :

“ While fancy paints and wishes roam
We strive to fix content at home ;
Yet wishes warm and fancies free
Are wafted from our hearts to thee.
Oft times, a social hour we spend
In converse with a favorite friend.
We talk of women, books, and men
But not a word of *oxygen*.
No chemical discussion passes—
The alkalies and all the gasses,
Till thy return, are laid aside.
Yet then, I trust, we shall compare—
With sage experience for our guide—
The different properties of *air*,
Whether 'tis best, at home abiding
When chilling northern blasts prevail,
Or, over hills and mountains riding,
To catch fair Nature's purest gale—

“ My vein of rhyme is exhausted. When I write again, it will, I trust, be at full tide.”

Mr. Charles J. Wister, in 1801-2, attended a course of lectures on chemistry by Professor James Woodhouse in the University of Pennsylvania, then on Fourth Street, south of Arch Street, not far from his own residence. Influenced by a notion that he might adopt medicine as his profession, he at the same time attended some of the anatomical lectures of his kinsman, Dr. Caspar Wistar.

Immediately after the close of the chemical course he arranged to continue his study of the subject experimentally with Dr. Adam Seibert, a German apothecary and chemist, recently established in his neighborhood. The doctor, who was also a mineralogist, had brought with him from Germany a cabinet of European minerals, the first imported to this country.¹

Perceiving how useful and convenient such a cabinet, for reference, must be to the student, Mr. Wister at once began to form a similar collection for himself; and in the course of a few years made it in quality and interest second only to Seibert's. He had gathered from

¹ Dr. Adam Seibert's cabinet of minerals was bequeathed by his son Henry to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

their natural positions specimens of all minerals he could find within thirty miles of the city, and had become a working mineralogist. In this connection it seems proper to mention that in 1814 he attended a course of lectures on mineralogy delivered in Philadelphia by Professor Parker Cleaveland, of Bowdoin College, and was ever afterwards his friend and correspondent. In the second edition of his *Treatise on Mineralogy*, 1822, Professor Cleaveland cites him as authority for the localities of many minerals.

In 1803, about the beginning of the twenty-first year of his age, he succeeded his uncle in business under the firm name of John and Charles J. Wister.

The Friends informed him, November 25, 1803, substantially that he had forfeited his birthright in their meeting, because he had paid a State militia fine.

He married, December 15, 1803, Rebecca, a daughter of Joseph and Esther Bullock. She died September 20, 1812, leaving him four children. Two of them are still living.

His mother, Lowry Wister, died February 15, and his sister Sally April 28, 1804.

In a newspaper notice of these two ladies Dr. Benjamin Rush, who was at the time the family physician, said: "Few families have ever furnished two such shining examples of prudence, piety and eminent acquirements."

In 1812, in the early summer, Mr. Wister moved to the Germantown homestead, which his uncle William had bequeathed to him, and continuously resided in it ever after.

He married, December 4, 1817, Sarah, a daughter of John and Sarah Whitesides, by whom he had three sons and three daughters. She died in her seventy-first year May 31, 1869.

In 1819, he and his brother John retired from business; and both were permanently settled in Germantown.

At that period and for several years after the Germantown and Norristown Railroad was opened, 1831, Germantown was a suburban village, mostly built along the main street in the midst of farms on either side of it. The Wister homestead had connected with it a large garden of fruits and flowers, a barn and farm of many acres under cultivation. To his many occupations the proprietor added, in 1824, the care of bees and in time became a noted bee-master.¹ Besides

¹ See, American Quarterly Review, June, 1828. Carey, Lea & Carey, Philadelphia.

horticulture, bee culture and agriculture, in which he was much interested, he had other pursuits.

From May 7, 1810, he was a trustee of the Germantown Academy, Secretary of the board from May 3, 1813, till 1842 when he resigned, having been active in all its affairs during thirty-two years.

He delivered a course of lectures on mineralogy and geology in the winter of 1820-21; and a course of lectures on chemistry in the winter of 1821-22, free to the pupils of the Academy but others were charged a small fee for the course. The net proceeds of both courses were spent in the purchase of globes, maps, etc., etc., for the Academy.

He was a director of the Bank of Germantown, during fifty years from its foundation 1814, till his death, and Secretary of the board thirteen years, till Nov. 18, 1827. He was also for many years a manager of the Perkiomen Turnpike Company.

Yet, his serious occupation was the study of botany, mineralogy, mechanics, astronomy.

He was chosen a member of the American Philosophical Society Jan. 1811; and the Academy of Natural Sciences elected him a correspondent in 1814.

His familiarity with plants indigenous to the city region and country surrounding it brought him into pleasant intercourse and correspondence with prominent American botanists. They were pleased to consult his herbarium and visit his garden.

At the back part of his dwelling he constructed, 1819, a workshop which was in time furnished with turners', clockmakers', carpenters', engravers', blacksmiths', tinsmiths' tools and implements which he skilfully used. In this shop he spent much of his time, especially in bad weather. He turned tops for the boys preferable to any they could buy; mended his neighbors' clocks, made mechanical puzzles, etc., etc. He delighted in clocks, possessed many, no two exactly alike, and found pleasure in keeping them so regulated that they harmoniously struck the hours.

Mr. Isaiah Lukens, a well known clock maker, machinist and mineralogist, who was an intimate friend, passed many an hour with him in the workshop; and sometimes Mr. Joseph Saxton—notable for his sensitive modesty—also an intimate, joined them. He was an eminently ingenious mechanic, who had devised and constructed improved machinery for the U. S. Mint in Philadelphia. He invented an automatic ruling machine for accurately engraving coins and medals of all kinds; and for many years up to the close of his life,

he had charge of the standards of the weights and measures of the United States in Washington.

Mr. Wister's interest in clocks and their regulation rendered the possession of means to ascertain time accurately very desirable. Accepting the suggestion of his friend he built an observatory in 1835; and Mr. Lukens constructed and set up in it an astronomical clock and transit instrument.

They observed a transit of Mercury in 1845, and reported their work to the American Philosophical Society.¹

To what degree, if any, his home surroundings had a formative influence on the character of Dr. Caspar Wister is uncertain, purely conjectural.

DR. CASPAR WISTER.

Caspar Wister, the first child of Charles J. Wister and his second wife, was born Sept. 15, 1818, in the Germantown homestead.

At an early age he was sent to a day-school kept by Miss Rooker. In 1828 he entered the Germantown Academy and remained in it five or six years.

Germantown was still a village. The deportment and ways of many of the boys while out of school were not satisfactory. Caspar had never been much restrained at home; was somewhat insubordinate, irascible, self-willed; and was probably a popular leader in mischievous pranks among his playmates.

He was in his sixteenth year when it was determined to remove him entirely from the influence of this connection. His father, accompanied by his mother, took him in his carriage to West Chester, and entered him there, June 4, 1834, in the Institute for Young Gentlemen, a boarding school, the proprietor of which, Mr. A. Bolmar, managed his pupils so judiciously that they properly observed the rules of his establishment, and the most wayward boys soon became amenable to discipline.

The correspondence between Caspar and his family portrays the prominent features of the boy's character, as well as the affectionate nature of the inmates of his happy home. It suggests that every thing there was redolent of harmony, the special interests of one being the common interest of all. While out of school each of the juveniles had

¹ *Labour of a Long Life; A Memoir of Charles J. Wister.* By C. J. W., Jr. 2 vols. 8vo., pp. 200-210. Germantown, 1866. This memoir, printed for private circulation only, is the authority for many facts and dates.

his petty occupation. A flower patch in the garden, with pet chickens, or pigeons, or canaries, or cat or dog were cared for; and the swarming of bees was a notable event. In the evening all gathered around a table in the sitting-room, the ladies with their sewing and the boys with their lessons; and, when the sky was clear, they were out o' doors observing the stars under their father's instruction.

Those letters, commonplace as they are, bring quite pleasantly into view the varied surroundings—supposed to exert a formative influence on character—amidst which he grew from boyhood to full maturity; but little more than allusion to them can be made.

The day after returning to Germantown, June 6, his mother wrote to him about the homeward journey by way of the Yellow Springs and Norristown, where they lodged, and at the close of her letter, said;—"I hope you are pleased with your school," etc.

His sister Mary wrote to him June 9:—"We miss you very much although you were such a plague, etc.;" and his father, June 11, substantially that all his boyish faults had passed from his memory.

In his first letter from West Chester, which is without date but postmarked June 13, Caspar addressed his father and mother jointly, and said;—"I received your letter on Sunday last and was very glad to get it. * * * Tell Mary I received her letter this morning and was much pleased with it. * * * I have a bed to myself, but there are six of us in a room. They keep as good a table as we have at home. * * * On Saturday afternoon we all went into the woods. We get up at five o'clock every morning which makes the day so long that it seems as long as a week did at home. * * * We have four teachers * * A cloudy day makes me so homesick I can hardly talk. This is a great place for birds in the morning from five till about eight o'clock. The robins are singing all around us, and sitting all around on the fences and tops of the trees and chimnies. Give my love to all and write often. I remain your affectionate son,

"CASPAR EDMOND WISTER."

At the time he was named some proposed to call him simply Edwin and others, Caspar. After fairly considering the subject, it was agreed by those interested that his name should be as he signed his letter. But a few years afterwards Caspar himself dropped Edmond.

In a letter, June 27, it is stated in substance that a cousin in the sophomore class told his father it was wrong to send him to a boarding-school—that he ought to have gone to the University, because there the boys need not study unless they please.

Caspar wrote July 18;—"I have been in West Chester more than a month and it becomes more natural to me. We had no school on the Fourth, and we went morning and evening to the Court House and heard the Declaration of Independence read and several orations delivered by some of the young lawyers of the place. In the morning it was read by a little boy not as big as Owen * * * * On Saturday we went out the Strausburg road to the Brandywine to swim. It is a beautiful place and we had a very pleasant time. I found some flowers that I don't think you will know. I have tried to dry them to take home with me * * * I have seen but one stand of bees since I have been here. It consisted of about eight hives in the old German style of boxes. I have discovered a great difference between my letters and those of the other boys. Theirs contain *five dollar notes*, and there are none in mine, which is a great difference. I want to buy a small box to put minerals and such things in and keep in my trunk * * * N. B. remember, five dollars."

Caspar was at home during the August vacation.

He wrote to his father and mother Sept. 24;—"I arrived here safe after a very pleasant ride on the Columbia rail road, at about half after six o'clock. Mr. Bolmar did not expect that I would return. * * * I have been attending a course of lectures on astronomy. * * * I wish you would get my *Græca Minora* of Will."

A request often repeated to date his letters provoked Caspar to write, "Letter begun Oct. 25, and finished Nov. 8, half past ten in the morning." He was dissatisfied with the school fare. "Bolmar gave us for dinner the other day pies made of green tomatoes served and sweetened the same as apple pies. They were the worst things I ever tasted. * * * Received the *Græca Minora* safe and sound, Saturday in October. * * * No Christmas presents this year. We rise before the sun every morning and breakfast at 7. The rest of the day is passed [as] formerly."

In a letter, Dec. 8, 1834, his father gave a detailed account of an eclipse of the sun, observed Nov. 30, by himself, Lukens and Charley.

Caspar had passed the Christmas holidays at home. He wrote to his father and mother, Jan. 15, 1835;—"I am once more in this horrid place, now doubly so since seeing you. From the day of my arrival till about three days ago I have been terribly home sick, but am now nearly well. * * * All here is very different from home, especially the eating. It is worse than you have any idea of, especially the bread and butter."

Caspar wrote Feb. 13, that he had received a long looked for letter—that except from his father and Mary he had not received a letter from any member of the family since his return, more than a month—that he had attended lectures on phrenology, and witnessed interesting experiments in natural philosophy and chemistry.

“And now, my dear father, I want to consult you about my studies. I think when I have finished *Græca Minora* to give up the study of the Greek language and in place of it to attend closely to mathematics and Euclid,” etc. etc.

In a letter to his mother, March 7, Caspar said;—“I now proceed to answer some of your questions. I have not touched a card in play since I have returned, and have thought of the five-dollar note you spoke of if I would give up the same. It would come very *à propos* at present, as I have but *one cent and a half*.”

His father wrote to him, March 22, substantially that he had received a letter from Mr. Bolmar the other day enclosing his bill, and was greatly rejoiced to hear from him that he had conducted himself with much greater propriety than heretofore, and that, as a small return for Mr. Bolmar’s report about card-playing, he enclosed a bank note, which he did not doubt would make this letter the most agreeable he had received.

Caspar replied March 28, 1835.

“I received your very interesting letter last week, and I assure you it was the most interesting that I have ever received since I have been in West Chester. I do not care how many such letters you send me. They will always be agreeable. You cannot think how proud I felt when I got it for the first time in my pocket.”

July 5, 1835, his father wrote to him in substance that Bolmar said that he learned something, but was too fond of promiscuous reading.

Caspar wrote August 13, 1835:—

“It has been a very long time since I have written to you, but I have been prevented by my accident, which kept me in bed three weeks.” He relates that while playing ball in the yard he fell upon a piece of a porter bottle, and received a wound on the back of his thigh, an inch and a half deep and two and a half inches long.

“I dont know why Charles should want to go to boarding school. He had better go to the House of Refuge I can tell him. If ever he goes he will soon wish to be at home,” etc.

Probably Caspar spent the Christmas vacation of 1835, at home and

did not return to West Chester. In order to qualify himself to be a land surveyor, a vocation which he had chosen for himself, he early in the year 1836, entered a boarding school, of which the Rev. S. Aaron was principal, at Burlington, N. J. His time there passed pleasantly.

In a letter to his father and mother May 23, 1836 he says;—"Tell Charley; last night I swam the Delaware and was not more than twenty minutes in reaching the Pennsylvania shore."

He addressed them again August 21st.

"There are so very few occurrences taking place in Burlington worthy of being committed to paper that, when the postage of my letter is considered, the value of these incidents is so very much below that of sixpence, that I cannot write often through motives of economy. * * * I go a boating very often indeed. I never yet found any thing so pleasant as rocking in a boat out in the river about sunset, just when the moon begins to silver the water, and the blue hills of Pennsylvania to grow indistinct in the distance. I sometimes go over to Bristol of a Saturday afternoon and lounge about, and see the people and the coal come down the Pennsylvania canal, or the New York passengers on the Trenton Railroad. * * * I shouldered the chain the other afternoon and went out with Mr. Aaron to survey one of the curves on the railroad."

His school days ended, Caspar resumed his residence at home, about the close of 1836, prepared to serve the public as a land surveyor. Two years were passed, trying to obtain profitable employment in his profession, but with little encouragement.

December 4, 1838 the Legislature of Pennsylvania assembled at Harrisburg. The genuineness of certain election credentials from some districts was questioned, their legality disputed. Two Houses of Representatives were formed. Each claimed that it alone was lawfully constituted. The Senate refused to recognize either. A mob of three or four hundred Democrats, sent for the purpose, it was asserted, had possession of the Capitol. Their turbulence was so alarming that a Senator escaped through a window of the Senate chamber.

The turmoil became so great that Governor Ritner, apprehensive of bloodshed, proclaimed the existence of rebellion, and required General Robert Patterson who commanded the first division of volunteer militia of the State to furnish troops to keep the peace.

Twelve hundred men under command of the General arrived at

Harrisburg from Philadelphia Dec. 8, by the Columbia Rail Road, and were detained till the 25th.¹

Caspar Wister joined a regiment, of which his townsman and friend Dr. Thomas F. Betton was surgeon, as his assistant. It is evident that professional examination did not precede appointment in this case. Nevertheless, he received the pay of an assistant surgeon while employed.

Up to that time he was the first of his kinsmen to engage in military service, because bearing arms was repugnant to their sense of religious duty. Subsequently however several of them served with credit in the late rebellion as regimental or company officers.

This riotous disturbance at Harrisburg made by political partizans, was called the Buckshot War, because Governor Ritner had directed the volunteers to load their guns with buckshot and ball. Though many were alarmed nobody was wounded.

Dispairing of lucrative employment in his vocation at home, he probably imagined that a country where settlers were many and increasing, land sales would be common; and for such reasons the services of a surveyor would be in constant demand. His attention was directed to Texas, the independence of which had been recognized by the United States in 1837.

Equipped with surveying instruments and a rifle, he sailed from New York, Oct. 28, 1839, for Texas, by way of New Orleans, where he arrived Nov. 18 and reached Galveston Nov. 20, and took the boat up the river to Houston. He proceeded immediately to the west. In a letter, dated Houston, Dec. 28, 1839, he wrote:—"You may imagine the figure I cut, mounted on a mustang poney, about half tamed, on a Mexican saddle, leggings, a queer blanket coat, and around my waist a broad leathern belt in which were placed a pair of pistols and a bowie knife, it being necessary to travel armed in this country—particularly when travelling alone, as I was, there being men here who might take advantage of an unarmed man, should his money be seen; and you are frequently meeting some prowling Indians who are friendly to Texas, but more through fear than love."

¹ See "Address of the Hon. Charles B. Penrose, Speaker of the Senate; and the Speeches of Messrs. Fraley, (City) Williams, Pearson and Penrose, delivered in the Senate of Pennsylvania, [March 1839] on the subject of the Insurrection at Harrisburg, at the meeting of the Legislature in December 1838." 8vo., pp. 207. Printed by E. Guyer, Harrisburg 1839.

Also, History of Philadelphia—1609 to 1884. By J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott. Quarto. L. H. Everts & Co., Philadelphia 1884.

This journey was to make collections for a cotton-shipper from Kentucky, and led him over "the best lands of Texas." He travelled on the prairies some two hundred miles, the huts of settlers being fifteen to twenty miles apart and the roadways very indistinct. "At night," he says, "I made my supper on corn-dodger; and, wrapping myself in saddle-blankets, with my head on my saddle bags and feet to the fire, was soon sung to sleep by the dismal music of the wolves. * * * *

"There is nothing doing here in engineering. I have turned merchant; been to New Orleans, bought some \$400 worth of goods and consigned them to men here at so much per cent.; and at the same time, I am broker and speculator in a small way, so that I pay my expenses and manage to keep an eye on everything around."

His experience during 1840 was unhappy. While at Walnut Bluff on the Colorado, in May, he and his four companions were taken, about the same time, with "bilious remittent fever." In this condition they were obliged to wait four or five days for a wagon to bring them medicine from Houston. Their only food was corn bread and venison; and some days none was well enough to prepare it. On the day the wagon arrived he took ten grains of calomel; two days after fifteen grains, and the next day ten grains of tartar emetic without relief. By advice of an old settler he took forty grains of calomel, and was free from fever for two weeks. It then returned, and he "again broke it" by the same means. The fever recurred at intervals of one or two weeks, and each recurrence was met with the forty grains of calomel till July. Then he became alarmed on account of the quantity of mercury he had taken to which he ascribed the cramps with which he was afflicted, and resolved to travel till he found a doctor.

He rode two hours morning and evening and completed thirty miles before another attack. He stopped at the house of a settler and sent ten miles for a doctor, but in spite of all he could do the disease continued, with pain in the region of the liver and night sweats, till the middle of September. Then the fever became intermittent with a much swollen spleen. At last he found partial relief, with a relapse every few weeks. He had pain in his stomach, which "refused to digest."

In October while chopping a limb of a tree to be used in construction of a hut, or cabin he divided the bone of his left big toe and split the bone of the second toe, the axe cutting through the side of his boot to the sole. This accident caused him to be on his back with his foot higher than his head during four weeks.

He ends his long letter, dated Houston Dec. 28, 1840, of which the above is a summary, saying; "it has healed up. I have thrown away my crutches and walk with a stick. * * * I cannot help laughing when I look back over my misfortunes, but looking forward is another matter."

Without announcing his coming, he appeared at home, in April 1841, bringing with him a cargo of deer skins which he sold to glove makers.

During this visit he related to a friend that while travelling with a companion over the prairie they lost the track. Their provisions and ammunition were nearly exhausted. It was agreed that one should remain where they were while the other should search for a settlement. It fell to Caspar's lot to remain. After his companion had left him alone he kindled a fire, and, to promote its burning, heedlessly poured upon it from his horn some grains of powder. The horn exploded. After the flash he was in darkness. He had been totally deprived of sight. His condition was appalling. Alone on the prairie, blind, without food. In this desperate state, unable to direct his movements, he crawled to find water which he knew was not far off. Fortunately he reached a little stream and by freely washing partially recovered his sight. His companion returned after an absence of a few days, bringing food and ammunition in time to rescue him from starvation. His sight was quite restored; and they were speedily on their way once more.

He remained at home till the autumn and then returned to Texas with a cargo of merchandize. He wrote, Dec. 9, 1841, that he "found Houston quite healthy and business good."

As soon as it was reported that Mexican forces had invaded Texas and captured San Antonio de Bexar, every one who could ride was armed and in the saddle eager to fight.

Caspar left Houston as a private in a company of mounted rifles. He wrote, April 17, 1842, just after he returned from the army, "Active service in this country combines all the hardships that can be endured. Our bed was the grass, the saddle for a pillow, without tents or covering of any kind. Rain or shine we had only saddle-blankets to wrap up in. Our food was little chips of jerked beef, heated on a ramrod till they resembled the cinders of a blacksmith's forge, and just about as nourishing. Of bread or farinaceous substance of any description we had none. This was slim diet upon which to ride thirty miles a day, stand guard, etc. It was harder work than soldiering about

Germantown on the Fourth of July. As we approached San Antonio preparations were made for battle, and I rose to the distinguished rank of Second Sergeant, which exempted me from guard duty and placed me in the proud position of file leader of the first squadron of our company. But alas! for the laurels. The Mexicans would not fight, and retreated from San Antonio at a full run. We took possession without firing a gun, and placed the Lone Star in triumph on the cross of the Cathedral.

"After travelling 250 miles, 100 of them through a country inhabited by Comanches, without a vestige, a house or any object to give notice that the white race had ever trodden this wilderness, it was a singular feeling to find myself riding down the streets of a city, dating its birth anterior to that of Philadelphia, and built entirely of stone—its palaces and churches, its missions and cathedrals, immense in extent, grand in conception and beautiful in construction, all sinking in confused masses of earth from which they originally sprang. A few more visits from a Texas army and the hand of time will be spared the work of crumbling their monuments. * * * I left my business in good hands; and if I had been killed, you would have been written to."

In the same year he was again in the army of Texas. He did not receive the pay due for this service till 1855, a modest sum, with which he procured four silver goblets and had inscribed upon each a "lone star," the national symbol, and beneath it—"Service of the Republic of Texas. 1st Sergeant in Sherman's Mounted Dragoons. Mexican Invasion. 1842."

Thus end the records of Caspar's sojourn in Texas, which was probably extended a year after he was discharged from the army. His experience as a merchant had not been quite satisfactory. In April or May, 1843, he came home not to return.

He began to study medicine, probably in the autumn of 1843, in the office of Dr. George B. Wood, and in March, 1846, received the degree of M.D. from the medical department of the University of Pennsylvania, his thesis being on the *Origin and Progress of Medicine*.

The same year, July 20, he married Miss Lydia H. Simmons, of Philadelphia.

He was now in his twenty-eighth year. He had had rough experience among pioneers and adventurers in a comparatively new country—then an asylum for such as go to Canada now, preferably incog.—and had resumed his connection with a better mannered society. He was no longer a citizen of Texas. He had become Dr. Caspar Wister

of Philadelphia, and felt no doubt that he was bound in some vague way to uphold the dignity of the profession—to work for the welfare of others, and not exclusively to please himself and increase his fortune, as he had done in Texas. He had taken leave of that method.

Starting with an equipment suitable and sufficient to enable him to follow his vocation successfully, he soon laid the foundation of a good practice. His attractive manners and attentive ways won for him the confidence and lasting respect of his patients; and his professional associates regarded him as a pains-taking and efficient general practitioner.

In Feb., 1848, his wife died, leaving an infant daughter to his care.

He was physician of the "Indigent Widows and Single Women's Society" from May, 1847, till 1852. In the annual report for that year it is stated that "the acknowledgments of the Society are deservedly due to Dr. Caspar Wister for his honorary though laborious services as physician. It is a subject of sincere regret that he has found it necessary at last to resign the charge he has borne so faithfully."

From 1848 to 1869 he was physician of the Association for the Care of Colored Children—commonly called the shelter for colored orphans.

He was elected a member of the Board of Managers of the House of Refuge, Jan. 9, 1849, and was habitually present at their meetings during thirty-nine years, till his death. Though he was not a consulting physician of the House, he was called to important cases and cheerfully responded to all demands upon his time and skill.

He married June 26, 1854, Miss Annis Lee Furness.

From 1856 until his death he was Medical Examiner of the Philadelphia branch of the New York Mutual Life Insurance Company.

He was a member of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia from June, 1851, and of the American Philosophical Society from January, 1859.

From June 9, 1862, to June 16, 1863, and from July 8 to Oct. 6, 1863, he served at the U. S. A. Satterlee General Hospital, Philadelphia, under contract as an acting assistant surgeon U. S. Army.

"Being a warm personal friend of General McClellan he accepted an invitation from him to join his head quarters at Yorktown. He accompanied the army on its advance from that point and its subsequent movement to the James river, being present at all the battles during that period, known as the seven day battles."¹—June, 1862.

¹ Obituary notice of Caspar Wister, M.D. By Craig Biddle. Read before the American Philosophical Society, Oct. 4, 1889.

He was a member of the Biological Club, a dining association, composed of members of the Academy of Natural Sciences, of Philadelphia, from 1866.

He was elected a Trustee and Director of the Philadelphia Library Company in 1868.

His only child by his second wife, a promising boy fourteen years old, died Dec. 14, 1869.

From May till October of 1873, he passed in Europe; and in the same year was elected a member of the Mutual Assurance Company.

He was elected a member of the Penn Club, May 31, 1878; and about the same time President of the Social Art Club, of which he was an original member. The name of the association was changed, March, 1888, to Rittenhouse Club.

In the morning of Aug. 21, 1879, Dr. Wister accompanied his wife to the Pennsylvania Rail Road depot in West Philadelphia. Just after they had alighted from a street car opposite to it, an impatient horse, ridden by an incapable boy struck his back and dashed him headlong against one of the iron columns which support the roof of the approach to the dépôt. Although his frontal bone was badly fractured, near the left temporal ridge, and his lower limbs were rigidly extended, his consciousness was not impaired. He gave detailed instructions for his conveyance home, and directed a messenger where to find Dr. D. Hayes Agnew, who had engaged to meet him at that hour in consultation.

Drs. Agnew and Walter F. Atlee conducted his case. A trephine was applied in two places, the depressed bone raised, and more than twenty fragments removed. His intelligence was clear throughout his illness. He recovered without any mental detriment, and, except a stiff neck, no permanent evil seemed to follow the injury.

Some of his friends, however, entertained a notion that the effects of this injury in some manner shortened his life, though nothing in his subsequent career can be cited in support of the conjecture.

Physically he was a typical man, and up to the date of the accident his health had been generally vigorous. To break thin ice in the Schuylkill for a bath; to walk ten miles to dine with a friend in the country and walk home after dinner; to swim along side of a yacht underway, with a line fast to a wrist, were to him delightful.

His interest in athletic sports led him, in 1860, to take an active part in forming the Philadelphia Sparring and Fencing Club. He was one of its incorporators in 1873, and its president from 1867. It has

been notably prosperous under his administration. The roll of its members now includes the names of five hundred gentlemen, all of unquestionable standing.

He was elected a Director of the Philadelphia Saving Fund, and president of the Inspectors of the County Prison in 1880. Infirm health induced him to resign the office in Sept., 1888.

In 1886, he assisted to reëstablish the Wistar Association which had ceased to be active since the winter of 1863-64, because during that season guests sometimes disturbed the social harmony of the Wistar parties by over-earnest discussions of political questions connected with the rebellion. Not long afterwards the Saturday Club, of which Dr. Wister was a member, superseded the Wistar Association and continued active for several years.

Only a fourth of the score of corporations with which he was associated was medical. The purposes of the rest were different, perhaps discordant—scientific, social, financial—and in no sense congenial in their methods or proceedings; and yet he found pleasure in contributing to the progress of each. Habitually prompt to decide, firm of purpose and punctual to his appointments, he acceptably discharged whatever duties fell to him in every instance.

In the course of his career, his experience of men and things had been varied and wide; and perhaps therefore, he was able to adapt himself admirably to any situation in which he happened to be placed. His friend, the Hon. Craig Biddle, most truly said of him that "although no man was less bashful, few men were so modest."¹ And possibly the quality here implied may have prevented him from ever drifting into narration of reminiscences of himself under any circumstances.

His genial, manly, open and pleasing address constituted in him a kind of magnetic force which powerfully attracted and influenced strangers at their first accost; and they, quickly perceiving his good sense, at once gave him their confidence, but without getting his in return, for his faith in men was notably restricted.

His spirit of humor enlivened his conversation, and his literary compositions which were too few and seldom printed. As specimens of his work in this line the following are presented.

Early in 1877—two years before his injury—neighbors of St. Mark's Church in Locust street, complained that the chiming of the bells, then

¹ Obituary notice of Caspar Wister, M.D.

recently hung up in its steeple, was a nuisance and brought suit in Court to have it abated. Dr. Wister described the situation in the following lines for the amusement of his friends.

“Concordia, we the bell shall call.”

—SCHILLER.

Tune.—The Bells of Shandon.

With deep vexation and execration
I wake at six to those St. Mark's bells,
That, with clash and jingle, make my nerves tingle,
While the doctor's visit my pulse foretells,
As I lie quaking and the house is shaking,
With the noise they're making—

I dread to meet
The storm that's brewing,
To their undoing,
In the troubled bedding of Locust Street.

From Christ Church steeple, o'er the humble people
Who dwell around it, the sweet chimes ring,
And add a savour to the rest from labour,
That the peaceful Sabbath is sure to bring.
But here's no liking to the din and smiting
That makes indicting

A purpose meet,
For the roar and rumble,
The growl and grumble
That make a Bedlam of Locust Street.

There's a bell whose swinging gives out no ringing,
And I hear no dinging in the State House yard;
And where its rolling looks like tolling
I stand and tremble lest my hearing's hard;
For, with steeple rocking and hammer knocking,
And the people mocking,

I hear no more
The low dull mutter
Those dumb lips utter
Than the Stone Washington before the door.

I've seen belles charming for vict'ry arming
 With beauty conquer, with wit compel,
 And read the story, in legends hoary,
 How friends fled shrieking from the passing bell;
 But the bell that's staying and keeps on swaying
 Is but delaying
 The time we'll greet,
 When saint and beauty
 Shall unite, in duty
 To drive the devil out of Locust Street.

Two years after fracturing his skull, Dr. Wister, the guest of his friend Mr. H. C. Lea on board of the yacht, *Vega*, visited the West Indies, and some months after returning home, published in Lippincott's Magazine for 1863;—"A Cruise among the Windward Islands—The Log of the *Vega*." The article is a fair sample of his literary ability. A few extracts from it are presented to show his style and the character of his humor in prose.

The *Vega* arrived at Barbadoes on the first day of the week. In this connection it is recorded in the Log that,

"Sunday was a day always sanctified to us by the absence of cards and the presence of plum-duff, a day devoted to in—and intro—spec-tion—inspection of habiliments often ending in looking up the diddy-bag, while introspection gradually slid into sleep."

* * * * *

"The mango is a very favorite fruit, about the size and color of a fine yellow plum. The pulp is very light yellow and tastes like a mild turpentine stupe. The skin is leather and its contents are fibres and bristles. There is no amount of personal intimacy that would warrant any two persons of either sex in sitting down together to eat mangoes, for the rending of the fibres, the dripping of juice, and the drawing out of bristles, unite to produce so unseemly and unclean an exhibition that this fruit should be indulged in only in the privacy of one's own bath room and in a sitz bath to the chin."

* * * * *

"With Antigua to windward we passed Redonda, a peak of rock rising sheer six hundred feet out of the water; one side of it is perfectly smooth and straight, and seems made for American embellishments, such as 'Use Purifying Pills,' or 'Two thousand miles to Wana-maker's.'"

"Mount Nevis enjoys a local celebrity for its sheep, and the steward went on shore and procured some diaphanous mutton—a sheep that cast no shadow, not because the sun was directly over its head, but from lack of substance—a sheep which if left to live might in time have developed progressively into a burning glass. When we got him, all chance of animal development was long past. We found that his flesh when cooked broke with a vitreous fracture."

* * * * *

"At six P. M. we passed Saba, its coast iron-bound, and without landings except in favorable states of the weather. The island is an irregular plateau two thousand eight hundred feet above the sea, diversified by precipitous rocks, sharp acclivities and ravines. Through one of these, called the Ladder, the town is reached, around which is found the only cultivation—that of potatoes, which are sold among the other islands. The population, amounting to one thousand eight hundred, is mainly devoted to the raising of chickens. From the sea the town, with its white houses and red roofs, looked exceedingly neat and pretty. The island belongs to Holland; its language is English. The people, almost all either Simmons or Hazel by name, largely send their children to Paris to be educated. They are famous for building a class of small vessels, although they have no port. The town, nine hundred and sixty feet above the sea, is named the Bottom,—which is quite in keeping with the other anomalies of Saba."

June 21, 1882, Delaware Breakwater. "And here we took the trade wind once more,—that of the region, which blows unceasingly through the funnels of the tugs."

The name of Dr. Caspar Wister was placed on the roll of the fellows of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, January 1848.

Between the years 1852 and 1874 he was frequently elected a delegate from the College to the American Medical Association. At the meeting of that body, in 1855, he was appointed its Treasurer and a member of its Publication Committee. On retiring from these positions, in 1877, his services were noticed as follows;—

"At the twenty-eighth annual meeting of the American Medical Association, at Chicago, June 8, 1877, on motion of Dr. P. F. Hibberd of Indiana;—*Resolved*, That this Association, in view of the retirement of the gentleman who, for twenty-two years, has discharged the responsible and laborious duties of that situation, desires in this manner to express its high appreciation of, and full satisfaction with the promptness and completeness with which Caspar Wister has discharged the

incumbent obligations of its financial agent, for so many years, and hereby tenders to him the sincerest thanks of the Association for such long and honorable service."

Being a delegate from the College to that body, he was appointed Treasurer of the International Medical Congress, which met in Philadelphia in 1876. After settling the affairs of the office, Dr. Wister transferred to the College, Feb. 4, 1880, \$800, the balance of the fund of the Congress in his custody, to establish the International Medical Congress Trust Fund, the income thereof to be applied to illustrate the Transactions of the College.

In 1860, Dr. Wister contributed to the first building fund of the college; and from Dec. 1882 was an efficient member of its Committee on Finance.

Many months prior to the close of his life his good health began to fail; digestion was impaired, and his appearance and movements signified to a close observer that he was in some degree an invalid. Then, he had frequent attacks of intense gastric suffering which were controllable only by the hypodermic use of morphia. Organic disease and malignant disease were sometimes suspected, notwithstanding that small tophi, which had long been observable on the terminal phalanges of his fingers, suggested gout. Many weeks in anticipation of the end, he directed that a post mortem of himself should settle his doubt, remarking at the time, in a spirit of grim humor, that he would like to be present, for he was sure it would be interesting.

Convinced for a long time that his recovery was hopeless he serenely awaited the coming end, and, as sane men always do, acquiesced in the inevitable.

He peacefully died at four o'clock, A. M., Dec. 20, 1888.

His funeral was after the manner of the Society of Friends. He approved of their doctrine generally, and irregularly was present at their Sabbath meetings.

He bequeathed his moderately ample estate to his wife and daughter.

Several of the Societies with which Dr. Wister was associated expressed the sense of their loss in formal resolutions. Extracts from them will be sufficient testimony of their appreciation of his worth and services.

December 21, 1888, "*Resolved*, That the officers and members of the Philadelphia Fencing and Sparring Club desire to inscribe on their minutes an expression of the lasting obligations which Dr. Caspar Wister has conferred upon them by the zeal and sagacity with which

he has directed their Organization, and which, in a material way no less than in the sentiments of respect and affection which he has everywhere inspired, have made this Organization itself a monument to his honored memory."

A portrait of Dr. Wister in oil has been hung in their club-house.

The following is from the Minutes made by the Board of Managers of the House of Refuge, December 27, 1888.

"Elected to this Board in 1849, for many years and until the severe accident which curtailed his usefulness, and indirectly was the cause of his death, he was always found most faithful and energetic in promoting the best interests of the House of Refuge, as well as of the County Prison, and with kindred institutions where his excellent executive abilities, wise counsel and eloquent and incisive address were always highly appreciated by his colleagues.

"His kindly and courteous and general manner greatly endeared him to his associates who will long hold in affectionate remembrance his many good qualities of head and heart."

The Library Company of Philadelphia, January 5, 1889, *Resolved*, "That in him we have lost one of our most valued associates, whose rigid conception of duty led him to discharge ably and conscientiously all the responsibilities of life, and whose rare natural gifts and varied culture invested with a peculiar charm his personal intercourse with all who were privileged to reckon themselves among his friends."

The Rittenhouse Club recorded a "minute to the memory of the late president," Jan. 7, 1889. The following is an extract from it.

"Dr. Wister who was of the finest type of manly vigor, met unfortunately with an accident which sapped his vitality and eventually caused his death.

"The untold sufferings which he has endured for the last few years were known only to his family. The heroic firmness with which he faced his inevitable fate, the cheerful alacrity with which he performed all his duties and the unruffled exterior which concealed the tortures which he suffered, made it almost impossible to believe that his life hung by a thread and that he was fully conscious of it.

"He felt, if ever man felt, that it was not necessary that he should live, but it was necessary that he should perform to the last hour of his life every duty that he had undertaken. No soldier ever died at his post with calmer courage or serenest port than he of whom we are now speaking.

"He possessed, as we all know, the most genial nature To the

young and the old, to the man of business and to the man of leisure, at the hospital and in the prison, his presence was as welcome as at the play-ground, where he mingled with the most youthful of his friends.

“His popularity arose not from any easiness of disposition, but from the profound regard for his manly character. Open, frank, decided and truthful, his convictions, from their sincerity, impressed themselves upon everyone whom he met, and, though you might not agree with them, it was impossible not to respect them. With the sternest sense of honor he had the gentleness of a woman toward those whose weaker nature had been the cause of their deviation from the path of rectitude. While he could not understand it, he would always pity it.”

The Rittenhouse Club had painted several years ago, by a skilful artist, an admirable portrait of Dr. Wister.

The following is taken from another tribute to his memory. It was resolved, Jan. 10, 1889, that;—

“The Directors of the Mutual Assurance Company desire to express their grief at the death of their associate Dr. Caspar Wister, for fifteen years a member of this Board. His directness of character, his steadfast honor and his careful attention to every duty made him an admirable representative and guardian of the large interests committed to our care.

“His cultivation and knowledge of men and books gave to his companionship a charm of rare quality, made more delightful by a certain flavor in his manner of the courtesy and quiet of another day, as a just, honorable and careful man, we shall miss him from our business, and as a refined gentleman his loss will be long felt in hours of social intercourse.”

The following paragraphs are taken from a memorial unanimously adopted Jan. 11, 1889, by The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society.

“Few men of his time have held so high a place in the esteem and affection of the gentlemen of Philadelphia as our late associate Dr. Caspar Wister, whose death, on the 20th of December, 1888, we now sorrowfully record.

“Born on the 15th of September, 1818, at the ancestral home in Germantown, Dr. Wister was trained, educated and developed in the best social atmosphere of his country, and his life and character illustrated the truth of his favorite maxim—‘Noblesse oblige.’

* * * * *

“His appointment to this Board in December, 1882, was hailed with pleasure by all its members and was recognized by Philadelphians as an addition to its strength.

“His duties here were wisely, faithfully and zealously performed ; sometimes of late at the cost of no little suffering ; for during the last two years, the subtle disease which terminated his useful and honored life made prolonged exertion very painful to him.”

The preceding sketch of the life of the late Dr. Caspar Wister has been written not to eulogize him, but to describe the prominent features of his character, so that all may see how it grew, better and better, and stronger, from boyhood to maturity, and why he was beloved by his contemporaries.

He was not a leader of thought in any direction, an investigator in any field of science, nor in any high office or capacity a ruler of men, nor a contributor to medical literature in any form. Nevertheless, he faithfully and acceptably discharged all professional and other duties assigned to him in this community. His manly ways and cheering deportment secured to him in a rare degree the confidence of all, and made him a favorite among gentlemen widely acquainted with men and affairs. He was popular. His warmly-attached friends were numerous. It may be said without disparagement to any, that of the many Fellows who have been more eminent and justly distinguished in professional achievement and learning, none has obtained in a higher degree the personal affection and respect of this brotherhood of physicians.

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R154. H76

R19

Ruschenberger

Friend of - Caspar Hister

